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Female Entrepreneurship in a Patriarchal Society: Motivation and Challenges

Abstract

This study explores the lived experience of female entrepreneurs in Kazakhstan to understand their motivations and challenges in light of the limited research availability on female entrepreneurship in a transitional and patriarchal context. Analysis from 25 in-depth interviews with female Kazakhstani entrepreneurs advances institutional theory by developing two frameworks of female entrepreneurial motivations and challenges. The findings stress the importance of institutional settings in shaping the women's entrepreneurial experiences. They also highlight the significance of regulatory, normative and cognitive dimensions of institutional theory that either enable or hinder women to open and operate their own businesses. Furthermore, the results also reveal the government's excessive interference in women's business operations and patriarchal expectations of Kazakhstani society that constraints women from freely engaging in entrepreneurship.

Keywords: female entrepreneurs, motivation, challenges, patriarchal society, transitional context, institutional theory

Introduction

In response to one of the United Nations' development goals to 'achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls', many initiatives and solutions have been created with positive impacts (e.g., Chant, 2016). Female entrepreneurship development is one of these initiatives. Female entrepreneurs have attracted growing attention in light of actual evidence of the significance of women's entrepreneurial activities for growth and development of national and global economies (Braches and Elliot, 2016; Stead, 2017; Tlaiss, 2015). In Kazakhstan, more than 795,000 people are employed by female entrepreneurs, which emphasizes the essential economic contributions of female entrepreneurs, who are capable of generating employment for themselves as well as for their society (The Astana Times, 2015). Alternatively, in developing countries, specifically in those transforming from communist to capitalist, free market economies, such as the various post-Soviet Republics, female entrepreneurs seem to play an extremely vital role in adjusting to the new market conditions (Lakovleva et al., 2013), leading to entrepreneurial and economic diversity (Jamali, 2009), social cohesion and stability (Sarri and Trihopoulou, 2005).

Though it is shown that the contribution of self-employed women tends to be higher than that of men (Minniti and Naude, 2010), recent empirical research indicates that the rate of women participating in entrepreneurial activities is around one-half of that of men (Singer et al., 2015). Notwithstanding, the increasing development of policies and resources offered to promote female entrepreneurship. It has been agreed that women still face more difficulties and pressures when opening and operating their businesses (Aidis et al., 2008; Jennings and Brush, 2013; Zimmerman and Chu, 2013). Considering the influence of female entrepreneurship on social and economic advancement, it is important to uncover the factors motivating, facilitating and

constraining women's activities in order to develop better initiatives, to foster female entrepreneurship, close the gender gap and attract more foreign direct investment (FDI).

Thus, this study enhances the understanding of female entrepreneurship under a patriarchal society and transitional economic conditions. It provides a new perspective to human resource development in which women are now encouraged to become entrepreneurs and invest in start-ups to develop their career, rather than wait to be developed by organisations (Rodríguez and Santos, 2009). It adopts an institutional theory perspective to explore motivations and challenges of female entrepreneurs, as well as, to uncover the founding structures that either enable or hinder women to set up and run their ventures successfully.

Theoretical Background

Institutional Theory and Entrepreneurship

Institutional theory provides important practical insights into understanding the role and the influence of contexts surrounding individual-level behaviours and processes (Scott and Meyer, 1994). The term “institution” commonly denotes the set of rules adjusting and regulating the economic, political and social systems which allow for human interaction and decrease risks (North, 1990). This theory is widely used in entrepreneurship research from political, social, cultural and economic perspectives. From this viewpoint, scholars such as Aidis et al. (2008), Autio and Fu (2015) and Fuentelsaz et al. (2015) imply the importance of standardised rules, observing the adaptive process of entrepreneurship, while focusing on the discovery of opportunities for entrepreneurs (Holcombe, 2014). North (1990), distinguishes two types of institutions, which are formal and informal (explicit or hidden). The formal institutions comprise of legal, political and economic constitutions, laws and policies aimed to facilitate or bound the individual behaviour, while informal ones refer to norms, values

and attitudes in a society (Alvarez et al., 2011). According to Alvarez et al. (2011), informal institutions are very important in creating desirable entrepreneurial behaviours such as risk taking and independent thinking. They also influence the social acceptability of an entrepreneurial career (Mueller and Thomas, 2001), and determine the collective and individual perceptions of entrepreneurial opportunities (Welter and Smallbone, 2008).

There are a few studies that focus on motivations or challenges of entrepreneurs, or both aspects jointly. However, what emerges from the literature is that the institutional theory standpoint seems to be under-exploited in studying entrepreneurial motivations and challenges. For instance, the research conducted in Spain by Noguera et al. (2015), reveals that the societal recognition of entrepreneurial career, as a part of normative dimension, plays a key role in motivating individuals to choose self-employment. The findings of Fuentelsaz et al. (2015) reflect the prime importance of the laws enforced by the state regarding business freedom, which attracts individuals to enter into entrepreneurship. These results are contradictory to the prior findings of Valdez and Richardson (2013), and Autio and Fu (2015), who show that those government policies regarding entrepreneurship, including the entry registration process and taxation restrictions, challenge the activities and choices of individual entrepreneurship decisions. Their findings make an extremely noteworthy contribution into understanding the factors influencing the activities of entrepreneurs. However, they seem to put the main emphasis on macro-level environments using the statistical analysis of secondary data. These may involve some limitations. For instance, adopting a statistical analysis, which neglects the experiences and opinions of entrepreneurs in full, may lead to limited outcomes. It misses important details needed to access meanings and to gain an in-depth understanding about the phenomenon (Bryman and

Bell, 2015). Furthermore, those findings are based on both genders' responses. This makes it impossible to understand how female entrepreneurs' motivations and challenges arise from the institutional influence.

Institutional theory is the most relevant interpretative framework for exploring female entrepreneurship under transitional settings such as Kazakhstan for several reasons. First, the main strength of the theory is that it allows to research the phenomenon in the light of its contextual environments comprising local institutional and legal contexts (Aidis et al., 2007), social structures (Welter and Kolb, 2006), and culture as well as the political-economic history of the country (Mueller and Goic, 2002). Second, according to Smallbone and Welter (2006), the distinctive features of the external environment under transitional conditions have an extremely high impact on female entrepreneurship compared to the more stable environments of developed countries. Therefore, this study is intended to explore women's motivations and challenges to enter self-employment in Kazakhstan. It refers to aspects from individual female entrepreneurs as well as to environmental factors of the country with three dimensions of the institutional theory developed by Scott (2001). They are regulative, normative and cognitive dimensions.

Female Entrepreneurship

During the past few decades, scholars have attempted to bridge gender and entrepreneurship by researching the phenomenon from various perspectives. Research to date has shed light on some of the different variables motivating self-employed women from the individual micro-level to the macro-level barriers they face in various contexts. According to de Vita et al, (2014), who examined 70 publications researching female entrepreneurship in developing countries, the plethora of previous studies focusing on self-employed women generally fails to consider the motivations and

challenges that entrepreneurs face, of which can be seen as a reflection of a country's economic and legal contexts together with the surrounding socio-cultural environment. This indicates that the common constraints that female entrepreneurs encounter, such as obtaining a credit (Muravyev et al., 2009), balancing family and business (McGoan et al., 2012) and creating networks (Derera et al., 2014) can result from gender role norms and social acceptance of entrepreneurship in the area where they operate (Baughn et al., 2006).

Studies reveal numerous factors motivating and constraining women to enter into entrepreneurship (Das, 2000; Deng et al., 1995). There are also different ways to classify entrepreneurial motivations. For example, Amit and Muller (1994) refer to 'push' and 'pull' entrepreneurship; Reynolds et al. (2001) refers to 'opportunity-based' and 'necessity' entrepreneurship; and Dawson and Henley (2012) refer to 'positive' and 'negative' entrepreneurship. The boundary between these classifications is getting blurred (Dawson and Henley, 2012).

The most popular classification of entrepreneurial motivations seems to be 'pull' and 'push'. In accordance with this dichotomy, pull factors attract individuals into self-employment, due to the prospective value for the individual, which frequently includes the desire for wealth and self-achievement (Dawson and Henley, 2012). In contrast, push factors drive individuals to self-employment out of necessity and is mainly related to dissatisfaction with one's current situation (Williams and Williams, 2011). For example, the research focusing on female entrepreneurship in Venezuela discovered that women were almost solely pulled by motivations, such as the desire to be one's boss and the desire for an increased income (Zimmerman and Chu, 2013). In a Malaysian context women were found to be drawn into self-employment mainly by 'pull' types of motivations, such as the need for independence, and the need for

recognition by the society (Ismail et al., 2012). Remarkably, these results oppose the former studies' discoveries of motivations of women in Poland and Lebanon, who were found to choose self-employment primarily out of push factors, including frustration and lack of other opportunities (Jamali, 2009).

However, the above pull and push classification seems to be used for analysing entrepreneurial motivations only, not challenges. In addition, the entrepreneurial motivating factors tend to vary across countries and societies, not only depending on individual factors such as age, education, social background and ethnicity (Fielden and Davidson, 2010), but also due to changing employment opportunities, economic development and cultural values (Benzing et al., 2009). It is vital to consider the significance of the contextual environments as an institutional theory perspective in analysing both motivations and challenges of female entrepreneurs (Belwal et al., 2014), particularly in a patriarchal context. Therefore, to explore and fully understand the structures behind female entrepreneurial motivations and challenges, this research adopts the institutional theory perspective.

Research Context: Kazakhstan

To explore female entrepreneurs' experiences, it is important to assess the culture of entrepreneurship and the position of women in the research country's context. Kazakhstan is a male-dominated society with strictly defined gender roles, where women are primarily accountable for household duties and their children, while men are primarily responsible for the family's survival (World Trade Press, 2010). In Kazakhstani culture, marriage is considered to be "the main career of a woman's life" (Nazpary, 2001, pp. 104). Motherhood is valued in Kazakhstani society and because of this, "childless women feel some stigma" (World Trade Press, 2010, pp.23). Earlier studies have identified that Kazakhstan has a strict traditional society based on Islamic

values (Low, 2007). Patriarchal norms have implications beyond the family, as women are underrepresented in the government and top management positions, with lower opportunities provided for professional training, career growth and entrepreneurship (Asian Development Bank, 2013).

Prior to 1991, Kazakhstan was part of the Soviet Union and since its secession from the USSR; the country has evolved from a Communist command-economy to a free market economy. As aforementioned, structures and forms of individual actions can alter in response to changes in institutional context (Scott and Meyer, 1994). Therefore, it can be expected that women's experiences in this study may differ within the transition period from a communist regime to the democratic state.

The culture of entrepreneurship among the Kazakhstani society is quite strong (Lee and Tai, 2010), as 78.6 percent of the population perceive it as a good career choice (Singer et al., 2015). However, a previous study on entrepreneurship in Kazakhstan reveals that an institutional environment is unfriendly to entrepreneurs, emphasising the failure of government agencies in fulfilling their fundamental functions (Lee and Tai, 2010). This issue has been identified as common for transitional countries, where corrupted governments consider entrepreneurs as a source of tax revenue (Smallbone and Welter, 2001).

In developing nations with patriarchal social structures, female entrepreneurship contributes to the societal development, challenging the traditional gender-role norms and strengthening women's positions (Fielden and Davidson, 2010). Along with scholars, a variety of stakeholders identify female entrepreneurs as the "New Women's Movement", stating in the title as "Forget aid, focus on foreign investment in female entrepreneurs as key drivers for growth and development" (Isaac, 2012). For instance, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development had

already invested \$50 million in the “Women in Business” programme in Kazakhstan to assist women-led SMEs to become more competitive (Pyrkalo, 2015). During the last few years, the government has developed micro-credit projects supporting female entrepreneurship through various organisations such as DAMU Enterprise Development Fund and Delta-Bank (Asian Development Bank, 2013). However, considering the untapped power of female entrepreneurs, self-employed women can attract much higher FDI, which greatly benefits the economic and social conditions of Kazakhstan (Blum, 2016).

This study on female entrepreneurs’ motivation and challenges in the context of patriarchal society and transition economy is different from previous studies on entrepreneurs’ motivation and barriers for several reasons. First, women in this context have less freedom to go out and work for themselves due to family and societal perception of the role of women (Nazpary, 2001). Second, they have less opportunities to financial access and development than those in Westernised, developed countries (Muravyev et al., 2009). Therefore, this study brings different perspectives on how institutional theory can be developed and reflected in the context of small businesses.

Research Methods

As female entrepreneurship still remains an under-investigated area, this study aims to generate an understanding of contemporary practices, obtaining richer insights into the existing research domain. As this study analyses the motivations and challenges of female entrepreneurs particularly in the patriarchal context of Kazakhstan, it takes an interpretive paradigm. It is “necessary” to “explore the subjective meanings motivating the actions of social actors” (Saunders et al., 2012, pp. 111). This paradigm is advantageous at comprehending the implications of how individuals are attached to evolving environments; and it allows researchers to understand the difference between

them (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Through extensive and in-depth descriptions of the regulative, normative and cognitive dimensions and how they arise in real-life contexts (Gephart, 2004), the interpretive paradigm is adopted for a deeper understanding of individual female entrepreneurs' behaviour as well as the underlying profound structures underpinning their experiences (Leitch et al., 2010).

Since this study involves qualitative data collected from individual female entrepreneurs in the Kazakhstani context, this research uses the narrative inquiry in order to access and understand the participants' diverse social construction of reality (Sheila, 2009). This research aims to reconstruct the stories to understand what had happened and how their motivations and barriers occurred. In this study qualitative data is preferred, as it offers the superior opportunity for "a feminist sensitivity to come to the fore", allowing women's voices to be heard (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 418).

Research Sample and Data Collection

Snowball sampling was employed through network and referrals. The selection criteria comprised of a) female entrepreneurs with more than 1-year experience within a small-medium business sector (SME), and b) whose entrepreneurial activities are based in Kazakhstan.

To meet the aim of this research, the qualitative data is gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews with Kazakhstani female entrepreneurs. The interviews included a number of open-ended questions with a few of them based on the theoretical framework of this study. The interviews are semi-structured, which have the advantage of being more flexible than structured interviews (Saunders et al., 2012), enabling the researcher to "capture the interpretation of a phenomenon in relation to the interviewee's worldview" in "context that is not structured in advance" (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p.143). The interviews were conducted face-to-face or by Skype

and/or phone in Russian and/or Kazakh languages. When permission was granted, they were tape-recorded, which were then transcribed and translated into English by one of the researchers. During the interviewing process, theoretical and academic terms were avoided to ensure that interviewees fully understood all the questions asked (Bryman and Bell, 2015). We stopped interviewing after 25 participants as the data seemed to be saturated (Guest et al., 2006), and no new information was released.

The participants' ages ranged from 23 to 62. Their businesses were in both stereotypical female-dominated sectors such as fashion, retail and catering, and non-traditional/male-dominated sectors such as manufacturing, consulting, and financial areas. More information regarding those female entrepreneurs is shown in Table 1

Insert Table 1 here

Data Analysis

NVivo is selected as an analytical tool for this research, since it effectively assists the researcher in undertaking analysis of qualitative data. It is an efficient tool when analysing multiple codes and identifying themes across the data sets (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). In addition, using Nvivo to find connections and relations in data is less difficult and time consuming than if done manually (Spencer et al., 2003). The data were coded parallel by two researchers to ensure the results' reliability (Miles et al., 2013).

The coding technique generates different levels of codes from the data, such as descriptive and inferential codes, which was inspired by Miles et al. (2013) approach. Dey (1993) suggested the 'splitting' and 'splicing' techniques to facilitate code generation at different levels. In the 'splitting' approach, line-by-line coding was

undertaken for fine-grained analysis. In the “splicing” approach, the data were consolidated by creating links between the categories, and thus, braiding the different strands of data for greater integration and pulling the data bits together to form meaningful interpretation. The splitting approach was mainly used to identify factors in the *regulatory, normative* and *cognitive dimensions*. Then, the splicing approach was employed to develop two frameworks of female entrepreneurial *motivation* and *challenges*.

Efforts were made to establish a link between the data bits and sub-categories in order to draw out the meaning, and assess how these contribute to the main categories. This helped identify the main themes of the research. Comparisons within and between categories were drawn to interweave them into a coherent whole. Memos were generated during the analysis; most of which were pertinent to the interviews. Nvivo can also be used to illustrate an in-depth analysis of the data in various forms of diagrams such as cluster analysis with tree maps.

Findings and Discussion

Institutional Perspectives

As the institutional theory suggested in this study, the experiences of female entrepreneurial are principally nested within the regulative and socio-normative environments as well as women’s cognitive internalised values and personal needs.

The following part shows findings related to these dimensions

Regulatory dimension

The Kazakhstani government seems to have developed various initiatives and programs to loosen the entry into the private sector. While referring to the regulative support, several participants highlighted the effectiveness of government incentives including the DAMU centre’s programs, which provides micro-credits to female

entrepreneurs and finances programs designed for specific types of businesses such as kindergartens and agricultural manufacturing.

Unexpectedly, a number of other female entrepreneurs mentioned the use of bribes as a fast and efficient way to network and overcome issues with the government authorities. Participant EE (mother of three children) said:

“The good aspect of Kazakh mentality is that you can make new commitments by offering money and giving valuable gifts”.

Many of those female entrepreneurs expressed little optimism about the regulative institutional support. There is lack of institutional control over agents working in the public officialdom. For example, participant UU (mother of two children) said:

“These agencies are so bureaucratic and useless. They keep sucking the blood out of my business”.

As claimed by Lee and Tai (2010), the context in transitional economies is more likely to be unfavourable for entrepreneurial activities. This study reflects issues such as dealing with overpowering authorities, complicated registration procedure, and officials’ excessive interfering and inspections. Female entrepreneurs in this research endeavoured to compensate for the lack of institutional support through their relational exchange networks and the use of bribes. For example:

“Our chefs are from China...there is a huge problem with our migration officials...who try to earn money by asking for bribes. They treat entrepreneurs as a wallet from which they can take money on a regular basis”. (Participant QQ, mother of three children)

Women from lower social class backgrounds voiced their greater concern when dealing with the regulative system, as they tend to be financially unable to hire

professional agencies to assist in the registration process and to give bribes to officials. The cluster analysis reveals the relationship between regulative dimension challenges “bribery and overpowering authorities”, “government agencies’ inspections” and “paperwork and registration process”. Due to the challenges experienced by the participants with government authorities in different aspects of their lives outside their jobs, the participants’ responses mirrored *mistrust* and *sarcastic attitude* towards the effectiveness of the government support in entrepreneurship. Therefore, the logic of the bureaucratic government that arises from the interplay between the regulative dimension and individuals’ cognition (Thornton et al., 2012) seems to lead to the emergence of an array of barriers limiting their activities.

On one hand, the challenges relating to an unsafe environment and criminals are found to be unique to women, especially to those who established their businesses between 1991 and 2005. This seems to reflect the chaotic situation after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Below is an example:

“I paid around 10-15% of my profit to criminals in order to be ‘secured’ from other criminals. The government didn’t seem to be able to resolve this situation due to two reasons: 1) they might have had tight links with head of those gangs; and 2) those gangs worked as ‘thieves in law’”. (Participant BB, mother of two children).

On the other hand, the government’s recent initiatives regarding female entrepreneurship appear to have the potential to develop, as they are found to be helpful by single and younger women, who had opened their businesses during the last decade. In detail, many participants shared *optimistic views towards a change in societal perception of female entrepreneurs in the future*, referring to their contribution to the country’s prosperity and transmissions of values caused by the westernisation. The

reason for this could be the effectiveness of a new Entrepreneurship Fund “DAMU”, which has recently developed new initiatives on providing information and giving micro-credits to female entrepreneurs in particular (Pyrkalo, 2015).

Normative dimension

The motivations and challenges faced by female entrepreneurs seem to arise more from the normative system of Kazakhstan, which is directly and indirectly reflected at societal and at individuals’ cognitive levels. This study shows that *gender-specific problems*, such as the complexity of balancing family and business, gender stereotypes, discrimination and lack of trust from clients and business partners, hinder female entrepreneurship. Self-employed women complained about being stereotyped as having problems in their private life, behaving as men and succeeding only with the support of their husbands. For instance, participant LL (mother of a child) said:

In order to survive and succeed I need to hide my feminine part as I am a boss now. This makes others think that I behave in the same manner in my private life, which is the reason why I am divorced.

As previously identified by Low (2007), due to the patriarchal structure of Kazakhstani society, women traditionally do not have to work as they are financially supported by their male partner/relatives. The patriarchal expectations of the society affect their entrepreneurial activities. Below is an example:

“Generally, she (mother) taught me how to become a good housewife, as this was my future role... I think if my parents taught me how to work well and treated me as they treated my brother, I could have been more prepared when opening my shops”. (Participant DD, divorced, mother of two children).

As a result, women seem to experience less pressure and risk in engaging in entrepreneurial activities, as they are not expected to generate profit. As Kazakhstani

women appear to be greatly influenced by the internalisation of their initial roles as caregivers, they seem to be pulled to self-employment in order to balance family and work, and to satisfy the societal normative expectations of Kazakhstani society. The ‘family logic’ was echoed in motivations of all participants, including participant RR (mother of a child), who said:

“During my maternity leave, I realised that I did not want to work in the office anymore, as it consumed too much my time. I wanted to have more spare time to spend with my child.”

On one hand, in a patriarchal culture, being a ‘female boss’ is not seen to be natural for many people, including men and women. This creates barriers for female entrepreneurs. For example, participant VV (single mother of a child) said:

“Talking about the cultural impact, in comparison with other countries we live in a male-dominated society. As there are 5 male agents in my team, I noticed that they feel uncomfortable when I give them instructions”.

On the other hand, it is the norm culturally that men ought to play a dominant role in almost all aspects of their lives; female entrepreneurs greatly benefit from using the networks and financial resources of their male partner/relatives for opening and growing their businesses. For instance, participant WW (mother of three children) said:

“Luckily, my husband has strong networks in the company where he is working, so we did not have to offer discount rate for the company’s foreign partners who are advised by the company to stay in our hotels”.

This study shows that the availability of experienced relatives of entrepreneurs, networks and emotional and financial support from the family can play a predominant role in enabling women to successfully launch and run their businesses regardless of their marital status, operating area and industry. Therefore, due to the unique context

of Kazakhstan, these findings seem to challenge the prior research of Manolova et al. (2007), who state that the support generated from networking is advantageous for men only.

As previously mentioned by Lee and Tai (2010), entrepreneurship is perceived as an honourable career path by Kazakhstani society. However, similar to other countries such as United Arab Emirates (Tlaiss, 2015), Pakistan (Roomi, 2011) and Uzbekistan (Welter and Smallbone, 2008), the societal negative attitude towards women leaving families for their own careers appears to result in issues such as stereotypes, lack of family support, gender discrimination and lack of trust from customers, suppliers, government officials and even employees.

In this study women working in traditionally male-dominated industries face greater problems with balancing their family and business, and because of the higher competition with men, they tend to work full days. The traditional assigned gender roles also seem to be inherited cognitively, as most women feel guilt for leaving their children at home, which in combination with Kazakhstani poor childcare system, potentially leads to psychological stress and physical tiredness. Below is an example:

“I do not have time for myself. I should not be disconnected from my family and from my business. I am exhausted morally”. (Participant TT, mother of two children)

Although most women’s businesses do not stand against the standardised norms, many of them became entrepreneurs to strengthen their position in the society, as well as to become a role model of an “independent woman” for their daughters. Below is an example:

“I want to be an excellent role model for my daughter. In our society women are reliant on men and there is a stereotype that they cannot achieve a lot if they are single. I don’t want my child to believe that her happiness is linked only to her future

husband or marriage. I do not want her to repeat my mistake. I am not against to marriage, I am not a feminist as well; I am just against the idea that a woman alone cannot be happy and prosperous”. (Participant VV, single mother of a child).

Some female entrepreneurs in this research took advantage of traditions and cultural practices of Kazakhstani society in order to establish their businesses in response to the ineffectiveness of institutional support, and the bureaucratic mess caused by the post-communist government through opening training and coaching centres for female entrepreneurs, nurseries, education and baby centres. Therefore, these findings seem to support the institutional theory, which suggests that individual actions can alter in response to changes in institutional context.

Cognitive dimension

Education and industry experience are identified as the cognitive factors which have been found to be extremely essential in earlier studies (Bullough et al., 2015). All of the women in this study had undergraduate degrees, and two of them had master qualifications from Western, developed countries. A third of them had professional experience. These cognitive factors motivate and enable women to develop and use their skills in the entrepreneurship field (Bullough et al., 2015). Women in Kazakhstan seem to compensate for their lack of industry knowledge and experience through their family's emotional and financial support. Below is an example:

“My parents and my husband already knew about my plan, so they were waiting for this moment together with me. They were sharing joy and excitement together with me during all phases including planning, research and setting”. (Participant JJ, mother of two children).

This confirms the earlier study which determined that the supportive normative environment in developing countries is more essential than education and skills for

women to succeed (Alvarez et al., 2011).

In addition, the shift from a communist regime to a democratic government provided more opportunities for Kazakhstani residents to study abroad and implement their knowledge in the new emerging market, which is found to be extremely favourable amongst women. For instance, education not only eases the practice of launching the business, but also helps make female entrepreneurs feel more confident by increasing their chances of being employed in case their ventures fail. Below is an example:

“Prior to going to the UK (to study), I knew that I would never want to work for anyone and I would always work on my own. I selected Education studies on purpose, as this was the sector I was interested in”. (participant CC, single).

The level of flexibility granted by self-employment is a motivational factor not only for the married or divorced, but for single women as well. Cognitively, women choose entrepreneurship as a career as it offers more time and freedom for their family, their needs and their passions. Below is an example:

“I am a successful mother of two girls, but as they grow up they need less of my help and I feel that I have more free time. For me it is very important to always be occupied. I wanted to direct my energy to something good. My younger daughter was very interested in horses and as I was looking for horseback riding school for her, I realised that there is a huge gap in the market. And I saw an opportunity to start a business that would bring the whole family together”. (participant OO, mother of two children).

This study also shows that creativity in seeing opportunities, which is important for entrepreneurship. Female entrepreneurs in this study highlighted the importance of the under-developed Kazakhstani market, which eased women's entry into the market, due to the lack of competition and information. Below is an example:

“There was a totally new market in new-born Kazakhstan. That was the time when everything depended on your efforts and your creativity”. (participant BB, mother of two children)

Based on these findings, it can be seen how cultural and personal values became motivational drivers at a cognitive level. This shows how institutional dimensions are closely interlinked with each other and sometimes cannot be viewed separately.

Additional Findings

A cluster analysis of factors in the three dimensions was also conducted to examine the correlation among different nodes using the Pearson correlation coefficient (Richards, 1999). According to this statistical method, the coefficient close to positive one (1) signposts the greater dependency, while the coefficient close to negative one (-1) indicates the lower dependency respectively. The analysis exposes the strongest correlation between the social macro-factors “societal positive perceptions” and “westernisation and change” (0.446) and a reasonably linear relationship between economic macro-factors “improved economic conditions” and “undeveloped and new market” (0.168). Additionally, there was a high interconnection between micro-factors “entrepreneurial family and friends”, “family support” and “networks” (0.40; 0.22; and 0.22 respectively). It also shows the highest correlation between the normative barriers “traditions”, “stereotypes”, which also relates to “gender discrimination and lack of trust”; and the relationship between regulative dimension challenges “bribery and overpowering authorities”, “government agencies’ inspections” and “paperwork and registration process”.

The results gathered from tree map analysis along with cluster analysis appear to validate the idea that women’s entrepreneurial motivation is facilitated principally by personal and family networks, as well as prior work connections at the individual

level, and by the market and regulative factors at macro level. The results also show that government regulation and support, and help from experienced entrepreneurial family and friends are more imperative for women doing business in traditionally male-dominated industries, while family support and bribes are important for women operating in traditionally female-dominated industries. Though, the market, regulative and normative type of issues seem to have a predominant negative influence on women's behaviour, the cluster analysis alongside the tree map analysis also reflected the moderate impact of "lack of industry knowledge" and "fear of failure and expectancy" at the cognitive dimension.

A comparative analysis also shows that challenges with the *supply of professional human resources* and *stereotypes* are common for all respondents regardless of their backgrounds. Women working in non-traditional, male-dominated industries appear to face bigger *conflicts when balancing family and business, and monitoring and maintaining the high quality service*.

Frameworks for Female Entrepreneurial Motivations and Challenges

Based on the above analyses and findings about the three dimensions of the institutional theory, the splicing analysis was conducted to separate all factors relating to motivation from factors related to challenges. All motivational factors and challenging factors are grouped to develop a framework for female entrepreneurial motivations and entrepreneurial challenges respectively. Figure 1 and 2 present these two frameworks.

Insert Figure 1 and 2 here

Figure 1 denotes the three groups of female entrepreneurial motivations from regulatory, normative and cognitive dimensions. The normative and cognitive

motivations seem to be similar to those presented in previous studies (e.g., Ismail et al., 2012; Zimmerman and Chu, 2013). The regulatory motivations are very different in the Kazakhstani context. There is a change in societal perception of the role of women. The improved economic situation from the central planning to the market economy has created unprecedented opportunities for both genders.

Figure 2 shows three groups of female entrepreneurial challenges from regulatory, normative and cognitive dimensions. The regulatory and cognitive challenges look similar in comparison to many other developing economies (e.g., Jamali, 2009; Smallbone and Welter, 2001). The normative challenges in the Kazakhstani context seem to be different compared to many other contexts. On one hand, as stated above, there is a change in societal perception of the role of women, but this change has only appeared in a small part society, mostly in metropolitan cities. On the other hand, the traditional perception that the women's role is that of a housewife still remains dominant in society. Consequently, many female entrepreneurs are more concerned about balancing their family and business, rather than purely focusing on developing their business (Shelton, 2006). In addition, there is evidently a discrimination against women in business and those that are in charge of men at work. It always seems to be more challenging for women to be entrepreneurs (Vita et al., 2014).

Conclusion

Theoretical and Practical Implications

In response to the need for further investigation of female entrepreneurship in novel areas and transitional economies (Marlow and McAdam, 2013), using the institutional theory perspectives, this paper has focused on female entrepreneurs' experiences to develop two frameworks of female entrepreneurial motivations and challenges in a

patriarchal context. This study makes several important theoretical and empirical contributions that give deeper insights into the existing knowledge about female entrepreneurship.

By integrating the regulative, normative and cognitive dimensions of the institutional theory with the individual-level of analysis, this paper highlights how these institutional settings form and condition the entrepreneurship processes including such discussions about the emergence of motivations and barriers in a specific context. Adopting the institutional theory allows us to examine how individuals' cognition is underpinned by institutional order and logic, thus adding insights into this interesting area of research.

Furthermore, this research makes a significant empirical contribution to the field of entrepreneurship. It tells a story about the experience of female entrepreneurs in the Kazakhstani context, which adds to the scarce amount of research on post-Soviet and in Central Asian contexts, an identified gap in the literature (Marlow and McAdam, 2013).

Additionally, the paper provides insights into understanding how female entrepreneurs behave in response to the institutional change from a communist economy to a free-market economy, following different and in some cases contradicting logics prevailing in their society. Through adopting an in-depth qualitative approach, this study explores the motivations and challenges of self-employed women in a novel context, enabling them to have a voice by expressing their opinions and sharing their diverse experiences in their own language. Moreover, the in-depth data collected from the female entrepreneurs have been analysed with the use of Nvivo, adding credibility and reliability to the analysis as well as allowing easy visualisation of the findings.

This study discovers the presence of multiple logics such as nuclear family, bureaucratic government and market in the Kazakhstani context, shaping the entrepreneurial behaviours and activities of women. Furthermore, in this research most women do not challenge the institutional settings and logics. In contrast, they make use of the traditions and norms in creating their ventures and overcoming their difficulties creatively. Female entrepreneurial activities are especially significant for the country's transition, as in response to the poor institutional support (Wilthagen and Rogowski, 2002), they provide necessary services such as childcare and education centres, contributing not only to the economy, but also to the general welfare of the society.

This study confirms that female entrepreneurial motivations can alter according to generations, and due to the transitions in institutional systems and transmissions of values caused by westernisation. Moreover, their entrepreneurial practices can differ depending on their social class, industry and age even within the same institutional settings. As shown in this study, while many women are reinforcing patriarchal norms prevailing in many developing and post-Soviet countries, there are a few women, who are able to break away from the scripted behaviour and therefore imply their own practices instead. The findings of this study highlight the need of increased social approval of entrepreneurship as a career for women (Rodríguez and Santos, 2009) and the urgent necessity of modifications in bureaucratic regulative system and business entry procedures (Klapper et al., 2006), in order to encourage more females into entrepreneurship.

This research can also be valuable to policy makers, especially those wishing to gain a deeper understanding about the processes of female entrepreneurship in similar contexts. This study emphasizes the crucial areas, where women need support, as well as a boost in female entrepreneurship to attract more FDI. Unless these constraints are

eliminated or reduced and gender policies improve for women, the true potential of these women will remain untapped.

Limitations and future research

Like any other research, this study cannot escape from limitations. Even though the research involves the lived experiences of female entrepreneurs in Kazakhstan, given the nature of the sample, the findings cannot be generalised. Longitudinal investigations and spatiotemporal examination should be employed for future research to identify the process of how female entrepreneurial motivation, experiences and behaviours change within the market transition and transform institutional settings. Moreover, although this project involves a rich in-depth data collected from female entrepreneurs, the methodology of following studies can be advanced with the use of triangulation by interviewing third parties such as their male counterparts or policymakers.

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Table 1: Participants (female entrepreneurs' profiles)

Personal profile	No.	Business profile	No.
<u>Age:</u>		<u>No. of employees:</u>	
20-29	7	Less than 10	8
31-40	9	10-24	9
41-50	5	25-50	5
51 and above	4	51 and above	3
<u>Marital status:</u>		<u>No. of years in business:</u>	
Single	3	10 years and above	6
Married	18	Less than 10 years	19
Divorced	4		
<u>Children:</u>		<u>Business sectors:</u>	
No children	4	Traditional female-dominated (domestic services such as education, kindergartens and baby centres; tailor; catering; and retail)	17
One or more	21	Non-traditional, male-dominated (manufacturing; consultancy; finance; media)	8
<u>Main experience before entrepreneurship:</u>		<u>Business locations:</u>	
Student/No experience	1	Almaty	18
Housewife (no or little experience)	8	Atyrau	2
Assistant in family business	2	Karaganda	1
Labour force	14	Kyzylorda	1
<u>Educational level:</u>		Shymkent	1
Secondary school	25	Pavlodar	1
Bachelor degree	25	Taldykongan	1
Master degree	2		

Figure 1. Framework for Female Entrepreneurial Motivations

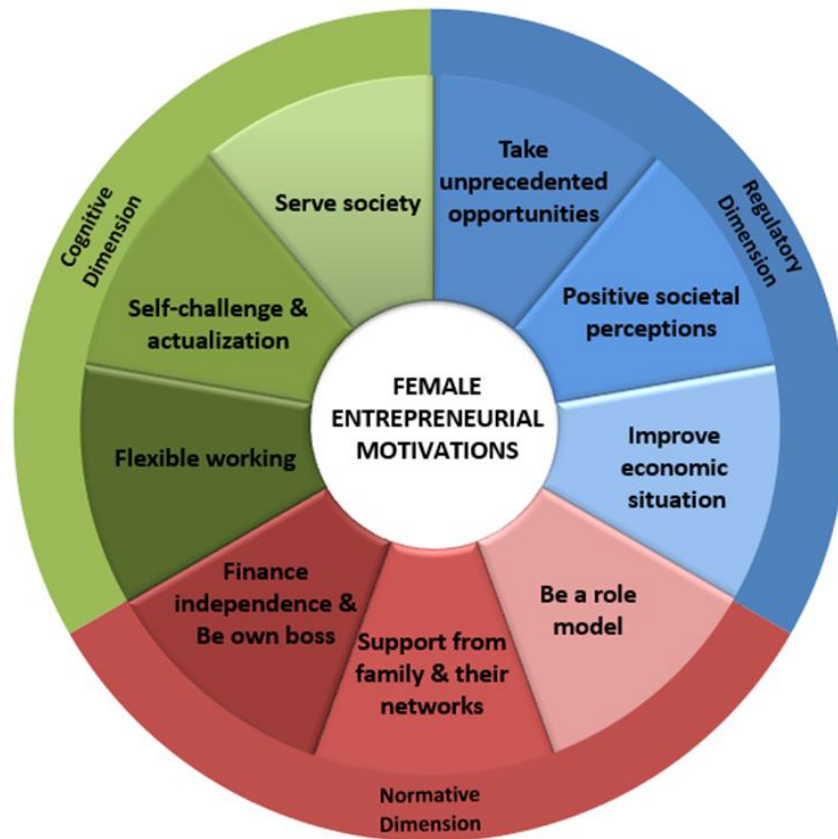


Figure 2. Framework for Female Entrepreneurial Challenges

